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ARTICLE

Time, Attention and the Gift in the Work of Thomas A. Clark

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This article considers Thomas A. Clark's critical stance towards modernity embodied in: (a) the presentation of time in his work; (b) the specific ways in which it values forms of aesthetic attention; (c) its treatment of the theme of the gift. It argues that, while his poetry doesn't engage in direct polemic, nor focus on overtly political themes, its ecopoetic underpinnings and aesthetic values have ethical and political force. It is suggested that the invocation of specific forms of attention in Clark's work resists the quantification of human experience; that its reimagining of time critiques the discourses of instrumental efficiency; and that its celebration of the gift as a form of relation seeks to hold at bay the commodification of aesthetic values. Time and attention are interpreted here via Deleuze's philosophy of time, expounded in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*; in particular the distinction between 'generality' and 'repetition' and the three syntheses of time. Art's critical function is seen in terms of Adorno's concept of the artwork as the 'social antithesis of society'. T.J. Clark's study of Poussin, which reinserts the temporality of viewing artworks into the interpretation of visual art, is considered as a model for aesthetic attention; the elements of pastoral and the theme of mortality in Poussin's landscape painting parallels aspects of Thomas A. Clark's work.

Keywords: Thomas A. Clark; Time; Attention; Gift; Repetition; Gilles Deleuze

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity (Simone Weil)

Thomas A. Clark is not an overtly political poet. His intense focus on natural objects and spaces, on plants and animals, on the value of aesthetic and contemplative states and on the possibility of turning away from routine preoccupations to quiet immersion in rural environments, together with his work's formal qualities of simplicity

and materiality, all might suggest a certain degree of distance or withdrawal from politics understood as debate, polemic, or the representation of power relations. At times there is an impulse to reject certain elements of the 'everyday' (and, in one sense, of the 'political'), as in the opening lines of 'In Praise of Walking':

Early one morning, any morning, we can set out, with the least possible baggage, and discover the world.

It is quite possible to refuse all the coercion, violence, property, triviality, to simply walk away.¹

Such a view of his work would accord with what was, until recently, a common view of 'nature' or pastoral poetry, as conservative or escapist.² Such views, however, have been transformed by growing ecological awareness and the rise of ecopoetics, involving the realisation that the 'natural', far from being a place of escape from the destructive power-relations of post-industrial (post)modernity, is the site of those power-relations' most intense (and potentially terminal) destructive exercise. Seen in such a context, Clark's work may be read as offering a sharp ethical-political critique of certain potentially destructive aspects of modernity. I will address in this article three dimensions of this critique: a privileging of forms of attention, a re-envisioning of the nature and experience of time, and a celebration of the gift, these three constituting forms of resistance to excessive complexity, instrumental efficiency and commodification as aspects of modernity. Summarising elements of Adorno's 'materialist thinking of the imbrication of art in the modern' (in his *Aesthetic Theory*), Simon Malpas writes that

Art stands out against the rationalising and industrialising drives of the modern, fragmenting them by recapturing the techniques and experiences disavowed in the continual striving for progress and development. This, for the critics of modernity, is art's fundamental critical potential.³

The political implications of Clark's work are to be found primarily in terms of what Adorno saw as 'artwork's necessary and illusory autonomy', which defines its 'social character', as the 'social antithesis of society'.⁴

It must be acknowledged that both the association of poetry with close attention, and the hope that this might serve as a bulwark against a technological (post) modernity seen as threat to the value of attention, have been so widely expressed as to be at risk of becoming clichés. Andrew Epstein deals extensively with the former idea in his book *Attention Equals Life*, but with reference to American poetry. Epstein's central argument links the idea of poetry as a 'form of attention' to the 'poetics of everyday life'.⁵ Epstein rightly reminds us that the 'recurring idea' that "poetry is a form of attention" ... is not a timeless or "natural" definition of poetry' but 'historically conditioned ... a reflexive response to widespread fears that "our ability to pay attention isn't what it once was"'.⁶ But he is perhaps too uncritical of some of the associated rhetoric, in that he refers to 'the crisis of attention roiling contemporary culture', presenting as a starting premise of his book that:

poetry is an important, and perhaps unlikely cultural form that has mounted a response, and even method of resistance, to a culture gradually losing its capacity to pay attention.⁷

I would agree that many concerns about the effects of media technology are well-founded, but the grounds of such concern need to be refined beyond a 'crisis of attention'. Someone who spends ten hours playing an online game is, after all, attending very intensely, even if one may worry about the effects on health or offline social relations. Social media is powerful because it is effective at capturing attention: this is often described as fragmented attention, but such a formulation only takes us so far. Attention while driving a car is fragmented, and necessarily so. Even, say, teaching a class, may require attention on several levels (content, group interaction, timing, environment), but this would tend to be seen as a creative distribution rather than a fragmentation of attention. Different sorts of concern need to be distinguished: attending to the wrong sort of thing; attending in the wrong sort of way; forms of attention to one thing which make it difficult to attend to something else; and so on. Epstein sees certain types of poetry since the 1950s as championing the ethical value of attending closely to 'daily life', and associates this with poetry's formal and generic qualities:⁸

Freed from the exigencies of narrative ... poetry steps forward as perhaps the quintessential genre for the rendering of concrete, everyday experiences and objects, for an investigation of the workings of attention, and for a method of responding to the moment-by-moment unfolding of daily time.⁹

Again, the general tenor of this observation seems reasonable, but the terms seem to invite further scrutiny. What is a 'concrete' experience and what not? The 'everyday' experiences of, say, a hill farmer, a school teacher and a soldier are very different, but what sort of experience is not 'everyday'? The 'everyday' can also figure in very different forms in poetry; in say, Wordsworth, or Larkin, or Frank O'Hara. As alternatives to the everyday, the heroic and the mythical are the most likely candidates, bearing in mind their literary significance. Certainly one would not describe *Paradise Lost* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as centrally concerned with 'everyday experience', even if at the time of their writing they may have seemed somewhat closer to such experience. In the case of Clark's work, the focus is not best defined as 'everyday experiences and objects'. As I have suggested, he advocates a turn away from 'the everyday' in certain guises. Rather his focus is upon natural objects, the experience of natural environments (but not excluding the effects of culture and human presence); also, to a lesser extent, ordinary (that is to say likely to be found in a home) objects considered as possessing aesthetic qualities and viewed in that light; also the processes and objects of sensory perception itself (such as colour and visual or aural features). Epstein is critical of what he terms the 'transformation trope': the tendency of reviewers to fall back on the cliché that poems 'discover the extraordinary within the ordinary' or 'transform the everyday'.¹⁰ This is surely a degraded version of the modernist (or particularly Joycean) epiphany. Epstein acknowledges the possible argument that the quotidian in contemporary American poetry is 'merely a deepening of the already extant modernist interest in the everyday' but counters that 'the modernists retained a greater emphasis on epic ambitions, on the mythic dimensions of the daily, on epiphany and the special moment'.¹¹ Epstein's stress on the novelty of post-war poetry in this respect underestimates the strength of the allegiance to the 'everyday' in both Romantic writing (such as Wordsworth, who does

not always seek to transcend the mundane) and in ecological writing more generally conceived.¹² Epstein's suggestion that more recent poetry in fact resists transcendence or transformation is somewhat reminiscent of Alan Wilde's characterisation of postmodernist 'disjunctive' irony in contradistinction to modernist 'suspensive' irony. In Wilde's account, 'suspensive' irony, characteristic of high Anglo-American modernism 'represents the desire simultaneously to be true to [the] incoherence [of fragmentary experience] and to transcend it'.¹³ In postmodernist 'disjunctive' irony 'an indecision about the meanings or relations of things is matched by a willingness to live with uncertainty ... to welcome a word seen and random and multiple' (a refusal of transcendence).¹⁴ Mythic elements are not absent from Clark's work: for example in 'Tao Te Ching [a small country sparsely populated]' (2011) there is an element of mythic allegory. On the whole, though, one would want to say that his work remains within the texture of experiences of perception and reflection available during the course of unexceptional contemporary life, but seeks to renew and perhaps change the reader's positioning and awareness of these; without transfiguration or transcendence, but with some sense of the numinous.

In relation to attention, it is worth noting that, if Clark's work seems to ask for and encourage careful attention, it does so in a very different way from many other literary forms. Anxiety about attention in relation to literature tends to focus on attention spans: whether there is a loss of ability to concentrate over long periods; on reading a 'big' novel or closely interpreting a complex poem. These are not the challenges that Clark's work offer. The elements of concrete and minimalism in his works mean that some immediate apprehension of them is generally possible, even if a rich understanding or full interpretation would require sustained thought. In a sense they *are* immediately available, and this is part of their aesthetic appeal and their mode of address to their reader. Rather than asking for a lot of attention themselves, they tend to incite attention to particular aspects of the world, or ways of experiencing the world.¹⁵ In this light, and as regards attention as an issue in contemporary culture, I want to address the nature of the intervention of Clark's work, not in terms of a very general assertion of a 'crisis of attention', but a more specific analysis of the its resistance to attention being treated as quantifiable and commodifiable.

In a forthcoming article, 'Paying Attention: Philosophy as Strong Therapy for the Information Age', Dominic Smith argues that:

we are the inheritors of a deeply engrained and crudely economic grammar that frames attention as a 'resource' or form of 'capital' that can be 'paid.'¹⁶

Jonathan Crary associates this idea with 'Western modernity since the nineteenth century'.¹⁷ In recent years, this economic model of attention has been actualised by the migration of advertising into so-called 'interactive' digital media.¹⁸ Notoriously, Facebook and other social media are 'always free' because users pay with their attention, which can be quantified and commodified by 'likes', clicks or links followed. Certain scientific or pseudo-scientific discourses around technology also share in the rhetoric of quantification and measurement of human faculties. Smith quotes two strikingly incommensurable measures. On the one hand, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi claims that the human organism can discriminate a maximum of 126 bits of information per second, meaning in a lifetime of 70 years one can process about 185 billion bits. This, he comments, 'most people find ... tragically insufficient'.¹⁹ In contrast, a 2013 experiment to simulate human brain processing on the Fujitsu 'K' supercomputer found that:

It took 40 minutes with the combined muscle of 82,944 processors in K computer to [simulate] 1 second of biological brain processing time. While running, the system ate up about 1 PB of memory (Whitham 2013).²⁰

On one level, these figures merely illustrate that we have no real consensus as to what it means for a human to 'process' something, nor what constitutes attention, and that the language of 'information processing' is deeply inappropriate to human experience. My present intention, though, is to consider how these rhetorics of quantification and commodification offer a challenge to the valuation of aesthetic experience. This is in order to suggest that Clark's distinctive poetics meets this challenge, resisting the discourse of an 'economy' of attention by means of particular forms of engagement with time and the temporal (also through the idea of the gift). The chal-

lenge is there to be met because one familiar way of describing and valuing aesthetic experience is as a sustained act of attention to a work of art or literature.²¹ We might praise a masterpiece of visual art or literature by saying that it demands sustained and deep attention. Smith suggests a list of possible alternatives to the metaphor of attention as something to be 'paid', including 'nourished', 'drawn', 'dedicated', 'demanded', 'defended', 'devoted', 'attracted'.²² But the boundaries are not clear: if an artwork may 'demand' our highest mode of attention, one can also receive a 'final demand' for a gas bill to be paid. The rhetoric of an economy of attention slips into aesthetic contexts. The trope of '100 books you must read before you die' incites anxiety about the 185 billion bits lifetime allowance, and the gallery visitors who photograph paintings instead of looking at them are acting out the conception of human attention as 'processing' by replacing perceptual experience and the formation of memories with a process of recording and storing.

My proposal is that time is crucial here. Bergsonian *durée* as opposed to clock time would clearly be one way to destabilise the measurement of life in terms of processing capacity, though I shall suggest that Deleuze's philosophy of time, which in certain ways develops Bergson's ideas, may be particularly useful. But my initial focus is the deployment of time in Clark's poetry. *Of Woods & Water* (2008) announces its resistance to the economic model of attention with its subtitle 'Forty Eight Delays'.²³ This title converts what would be a negative term within the discourse of efficient processing into an element of aesthetic form, suggestive of a musical genre.²⁴ That resistance is also embedded in its diction. The following words are selected from the forty-eight quatrains which make up *Of Woods & Water*:

leisurely
relax
slow
hesitation
detains
briefly
slow-moving

slows
defer
immediacy
hidden
passing
stay
stillness
for a moment
continually
leisurely

The word 'leisurely' occurs in the partly-mirrored first and last quatrains, in the line 'there is a leisurely turning of the water'. The cumulative effect here is, I think, something more than just a mood. It works in collaboration with the formal and design features of the book. We note the absence of page numbers, which is common to a number of Clark's books. The work both invites and resists quantification or measure: each quatrain is a unique event placed on a white, unnumbered page, and yet the subtitle tells us how many there are, and the free-verse quatrains use their own form of poetic 'measure', but on a scale incommensurable with the sort of quantification of attention represented by measuring processing capacity. The poetry is not 'demanding' in the way that *The Waste Land* is; there is nothing here difficult to understand on the immediate level, nor requiring specialist knowledge. It invites, I think, a highly distinctive form of attention, conditioned by a sense of temporal suspension. It is neither a 'quick read' nor a 'slow read', requiring rather a leisurely process of return and reflection.

The first use of the word 'delay' in Clark's *oeuvre* seems to be in a 1982 book, *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest*.²⁵ Twenty-six years earlier than *Of Woods & Water: Forty-Eight Delays*, this work shows by comparison both the continuity and the development in Clark's work. Notable, for example, is the continuity of focus on the value of the natural environment and the formal poise suggested by the title or subtitle announcing a number of poetic units. Development is apparent in the presence of evidently symbolic and mythic-sounding lines in the earlier work (which are absent from the later work):

In the beginning was the forest and the forest stretched everywhere, unbroken
and single.

When men let light into the forest, darkness hid in their hearts.
(‘Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest’)

The word ‘delay’ occurs in a seemingly more conventional sense than the formal noun use of ‘A Delay of Eight Syllables’ (inscribed in the window of Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh) or ‘Forty-Eight Delays’ (*Of Woods & Water*):

The function of trees in a forest is to delay our passage from one part of the
forest to another.
(‘Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest’)

The implications of the line – that natural forms have the potential to reshape our temporal relations – anticipate that later, formal sense of ‘delay’. Earlier in the work we read: ‘All the verbs of the forest are intransitive’. While ‘delay’ is not grammatically intransitive in the phrase ‘to delay our passage’, the uses of delay to which Clark’s poetic tends are indeed intransitive: ‘A Delay of Eight Syllables’ and ‘Forty-Eight Delays’ are not delays to some specific process or thing. A delay in this sense is not focused on that which is delayed but on the value of the delay itself. Underlying this evocation of a subjective (human) experience of slowed time is the other-than-human experience of the trees and the forest ecosystem. What Peter Wohlleben refers to as ‘the slow rhythms of life in ancient forests’ are not merely a matter of human response, but integral to entities such as trees and lichen, which live and develop over time scales of (in some cases) hundreds of years.²⁶ In tracing Clark’s use of the word ‘delay’ from *Twenty-Four Sentences* to *Of Woods & Water*, we might observe a process by which a more conventionally post-Romantic use of natural symbol in early Clark (the human interaction with nature as a source of experiential and ethical illumination) mutates, via the poet’s engagement with concrete poetry, minimalism and a materiality of the word, into his mature style (‘delay’ as formal device, with the ethical/phenomenological ‘lesson’ embodied in linguistic form rather than represented).

Ten years after *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest*, a small pamphlet entitled *Waiting* (1992) treats the word 'waiting' to a sustained process of meditative variation. It includes the phrase 'an intransitive waiting'.²⁷ 'Delay' and 'waiting' are both terms with primarily negative connotations in normal use, at least in the context of the functionalist assumptions of late capitalism underlying a measurement of life in bytes (there is a slow food movement and a slow TV movement; we have yet to see a 'slow computer' movement, for obvious reasons, although the fashion for 'digital detox' is perhaps its equivalent). Clark's poetry subjects the negative connotations of 'delay' and 'waiting' in a functionalist context to radical revaluation. The pamphlet, *Waiting*, assimilates waiting to verbs of action and perception. It is made up of a series of stanzas, with lengths varying between two and six lines, the lines being very short, frequently consisting of only one word.

The fourth stanza, for example, reads:

standing
walking
running
waiting

while the tenth stanza has a similar form:

looking
listening
touching
waiting

A central structural principle of the poem is that the word 'waiting' occurs at least once in every stanza. The word is also paired with adverbs and adjectives, including 'indifferently', 'patiently', 'idly', 'provisional', 'generous'; and with places: 'where the shade is deepest'; 'under/a pine tree'. Sometimes consequences are suggested:

waiting
and forgetting

and falling
asleep

On two occasions the word is doubled almost at once: 'waiting/upon waiting'; 'waiting and/waiting'. Near the end of the work, we find a sudden (and unusual) emotiveness of language:

singing
weeping
hurting
waiting

The work ends with a complex series of ambiguities:

in morning
light still
waiting

Here 'still/waiting' as adverb and participle leaves the reader with a sense of tension, even a suggestion of impatience, but when 'still' is read as an adjective it suggests a stillness in the waiting which negates that tension, whether because the morning light seems 'still' (although natural daylight is never entirely still), or because the speaker is waiting in a state of physical or spiritual stillness. It might even be a metapoetic phrase: the poem is still a poem entitled (and about) waiting, as process and act. But all these meanings are overshadowed by the first line's homophone, 'in mourning', which displaces agency from a human subject to the light itself: the light itself is 'in mourning' and is 'still waiting' (for darkness?). The poem is dominated by present participles and gerunds, with the characteristic ambiguity resulting from the participle's ability to serve as adjective or verb. These forms embody a specific temporality (a continuing action or process). The poem moves from waiting as a verb ('patiently waiting') to waiting as a gerund ('a provisional waiting'). The act of waiting involves a voluntary or involuntary ceding of

control to that for which one is waiting (bus, person, moment, weather). But 'an intransitive/waiting' (stanza 13) posits an idea of pure waiting, not 'for' anything, and hence implicitly for something which cannot be specified. In this instance waiting has a more spiritual or phenomenological purpose. When one has to wait – say for the next ferry – one may be given the gift of suspended time: one's attention is (or was, before the advent of mobile communication technology) temporarily liberated from the possibility of accounting, or commodifying processes. One might think here of *Waiting for Godot*, especially the exchange in which Vladimir remarks 'That passed the time', and Estragon replies 'It would have passed in any case'.²⁸ Clark and Beckett both pose questions about waiting, as something which we *do* or as something which *happens* to us. They thereby interrogate time itself: whether humans perform time or experience it passively. Clark's pamphlet captures the dual aspect of tension and relaxation in ordinary experiences of waiting, and shifts these aspects to a philosophical and reflective plane without abandoning the ordinary. The note of tension arises in part from the absence of pronouns and the absence of main verbs, meaning that there is a perpetual suspension of syntactical closure.

How can one characterise the temporal mode associated with delay and waiting, lifted out of its negative associations as impediments to 'efficient' activity, and revalued as the occasions or conditions of forms of attention which are not commodified or quantified? I don't think this temporal mode can be fully defined, at least not by me, and perhaps shouldn't be. However, to return to Dominic Smith's article: his provisional gesture towards an alternative metaphorical language for attention is drawn from music:

What consequences follow for how we relate to attention today, ... by framing it, not as something to be 'paid', but as something to be 'played', in the sense of music? ... this shift ... introduces a different grammar and conceptual toolbox for framing attention, and different metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and aesthetic considerations thereby. Instead of framing attention as a 'resource', a 'supply', or as a form of 'capital' to be mined, exploited

or captured, for example, it allows us to frame it as something potentially 'resonant', 'dissonant', 'tonic', 'in concert', 'harmonic', 'creative', 'processual', 'rhythmic' or 'polyrhythmic'; further, and crucially, it provides an alternative standard against which to assess the successes and failures of the crudely economic model of attention Are 'acts' of attention properly speaking 'acts' at all, or do they involve a passive capacity for synthesis and receptivity on the model of attending to music²⁹

This suggestion feels appropriate to the poetics of delay and waiting which I have been sketching out. In part this may be because titles or sub-titles such as *A Delay of Eight Syllables* and *Forty Eight Delays* sound to my ear akin to musical titles; and this in turn may be because units of 4 and 8 are so crucial both to poetic measure in English (the quatrain and the octet – the former much used in Clark's work) and many elements of Western music, from 4/4 'common time' to twelve-bar blues and (perhaps most relevant to Clark) Scottish folk music: the 6/8 of the jig and the 4/4 of the reel.³⁰ The term 'composing' attention would seem particularly appropriate: these poetic works do not 'demand' that we 'pay attention'; they 'compose' attention, both in the sense of being composed themselves, and in inciting composure as an existential state. The musical analogy raises again those questions about activity and passivity, but also implicitly deconstructs that antithesis. One wouldn't think of listening to music as a passive activity, but nor is it in any straightforward sense an act of will. The 'music' of Clark's poetry, elicited from the precise patterning, echoes and placing of words, sounds and spaces, incites analogous forms of attention.

A striking features of these poems, and of Clark's work in general, is the use of repetition as a key ordering principle: both the structural repetition of the word 'waiting' throughout *Waiting*, and the repetition-with-variation of the first and last sections of *Of Woods & Water*:

on a wide bend of the river
there is a leisurely turning of water

that flows so profoundly it can
relax into every gesture

on a wide bend of the river
there is a leisurely turning of water
away from the light and into
a broad course of darkness

These lines could be scanned in various ways, but the crucial effect seems to me to be a shift from rising rhythm at the start of lines (the iambs of 'that flows', 'relax', 'away' and 'a broad') to a falling rhythm (trochees such as 'river', 'water', 'gesture', 'into'). There is a relatively high number of unstressed syllables ('on a', 'of the', 'there is a', and the final two syllables of 'leisurely') which, along with the polysyllables 'leisurely' and 'profoundly', creates a sense of relaxation, brought up short by the stress of the final line (scanned as iamb, trochee, spondee; or two bacchii).

It is suggestive that this work ends with 'darkness', linking it with the hint, in *Waiting*, that light itself might be waiting for darkness, as well as connecting it to the dark/light symbolism of environmental destruction in *Twenty Four Sentences. Of Woods & Water* is a poem filled with light and dark – 'a dark slow-moving water' (8); 'more light on the branch/more light on the leaf' (14); 'falling light' (17); 'an arc/of light into darkness' (32) – and also of their interaction in shadow and shade: 'shadows of birds' (13); 'shade is the candour' (19); 'something made of shadow ... retreats into shadow' (30); 'pale in the shadows' (32); 'when you come up out of a shadow' (38); 'a shift in light/a distribution of shadows' (41). The poem acquires the qualities of a patterning of light and shade, as of sunlight through leaves, rather as in Geoffrey Hill's lines

Roughly-silvered leaves that are the snow
On Ararat seen through those leaves.
The sun lays down a foliage of shade.³¹

In both cases, the pattern-making quality of light and shade serves as a *mise-en-abyme* of the poem as representation embodied in pattern. The reader is drawn to reflect

upon, and question, the phenomenology of light and darkness, and its expression in language. We commonly say that 'night falls', but not usually that 'day falls': presumably because the sun appears to come 'up' at dawn, whereas the night appears to come 'down' at dusk. 'Darkness falls' is loaded with symbolic connotations, whereas light may simply fall upon an object or scene; however, a shaft of light may figure spiritual transformation. What is the difference between shadow and shade, and how do they inflect the loaded cultural associations of light (enlightenment, reason, clarity, insight, realisation, falling light as divine presence) and darkness (danger, death, the unconscious, the hidden)? In Clark as in Hill there is a sense of the reciprocity of light and dark, or light and shade; their mutual dependence, which resists a binary sense of their meaning.

Here I would like to invoke elements of Gilles Deleuze's philosophy as it bears on time, repetition and the gift. At the opening of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze distinguishes between 'generality', which he associates with exchange and substitution, and 'repetition', which he associates with 'non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities'.³² The first of these (generality), which 'expresses a point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another' might, at first sight, seem applicable to the repetition of the same word (such as 'waiting'). Considered as a signifier, independent of its material support, the printed word is, in principle, substitutable. Two factors, however, work against the assumption in the present case. First, poetry in general has order, structure and pattern as highly meaningful elements. So each instance of the word 'waiting' is different precisely because it follows, and precedes, in a certain specific relation or pattern, a previous instance. In relation to discourse more generally, this would be an instance of what James Williams terms the marginal case which is in fact the most indicative (or, as he puts it 'For [Deleuze], all repetitions are of the marginal kind').³³ Second, Clark's work is heavily committed to the materiality and objecthood of the word.³⁴ His use of pattern, concrete poetry, poetry objects, cards or installed texts all bring to the fore the non-substitutable status of words as material presence in the world, over against their exchangeability as disembodied signifiers. In this he typifies, though in highly distinctive form, the role of repetition in innovative poetry. As Lyn Hejinian observes in her classic 1983 essay 'The Rejection of Closure':

Repetition, conventionally used to unify a text or harmonize its parts, as if returning melody to the tonic, instead, in these works ... challenges our inclination to isolate, identify, and limit the burden of meaning given to an event (the sentence or line). Here, where certain phrases recur in the work, recontextualized and with new emphasis, repetition disrupts the initial apparent meaning scheme. The initial reading is adjusted; meaning is set in motion, emended and extended, and the rewriting that repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely.³⁵

It is interesting, then, that Deleuze concludes the second paragraph of his Introduction to *Repetition and Difference* with the following observation:

If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. There is, therefore, an economic difference between the two.³⁶

Clark's use of repetition could be seen as removing his language from the (potentially debased) economy of general linguistic exchange and offering an economy of the gift, in which each instantiation of the word is conceived as a unique offering to the reader. This point could be further illustrated in relation to Clark's card poems *Generosity* (2010) and *Gaelic Flowers* (2016).³⁷ Commissioned for the *Poetry Beyond Text* project exhibitions (Visual Research Centre, Dundee and the Royal Scottish Academy), and for a 2016 symposium on Clark's work at the Scottish Poetry Library respectively, these two multiples were offered as a free gift for visitors or delegates to take away.³⁸ The text of *Generosity* evokes objects in the natural world, human affective/cognitive responses, and even time itself as potential gifts:

if the waves were silver
and the leaves were gold
if the miles were accomplishments
and the hours were joys
you would give them all away
if cares were goods

and moods were faculties
if an impulse brought you to
banks of wild strawberries
you would give them all away
whatever your thought can touch
all that your hands can reach

In an article on Deleuze's concept of repetition, Adrian Parr comments that

repetition is connected to the power of difference in terms of a productive process that produces variation in and through every repetition. In this way, repetition is best understood in terms of discovery and experimentation; it allows new experiences, affects and expressions to emerge.³⁹

In the case of *Generosity*, the repetition is not primarily at the level of the word (although 'you would give them all away' is repeated), but at the level of the poem-object, and the experiences which it evokes and generates. As a multiple, the card work is repeated, but each instance has a different trajectory, leaving the event (exhibition or symposium) with a different person, and potentially taking up some place in their lives, material environment and experience. The principle of repetition as instantiating a productive power of difference applies also to the reading process. All of the interpretations created or revealed in a process of 'close reading' are actuated only by the event of reading (and, previously, by the event of writing).

The experience of reading many of Clark's works is defined precisely by the tension between a more conventional idea of repetition as equivalence or substitutability, and a Deleuzian sense of repetition as founded in difference. His poems come to effect a subversion of the former idea by the latter. The repetition-with-difference of the first and last stanzas of *Waiting* performs this Deleuzian conception of repetition, but the conception is most powerfully present precisely when the repetition seems to minimize difference: as in the lines: 'waiting/and longing/waiting and/waiting' (stanza 22). These lines act out the way in which, when one is in fact waiting (say for a bus, or for a ferry), each moment of waiting is subtly different because of

the moments which have preceded it (otherwise one would only be waiting for one moment). It is, after all, the succession of *different* moments which defines waiting as such. Or the way in which moments or acts of waiting are inflected by different emotions: longing, boredom, pleasure. This opens up an alternative vision of time. In the light of Deleuze's philosophy, we may see Clark's focus on delay, attention and waiting, not simply as a plea to set aside specific periods of time for quiet attention or reflection, but as a more radical invocation of incommensurable modes of time; a setting-aside of quantifiable time as a series of exchangeable units (the instrumentalised time of modernity) in favour of a different mode of being. Deleuze's vision of time also helps us to make sense of the contradictory 'calculations' concerning the time available to humans cited by Smith, and why the idea of the 'tragic inadequacy' of 'a lifetime of 70 years' in which 'one can process about 185 billion bits' may strike us as absurd. Humans are not clocks, nor are they computers, and though we do make strenuous efforts to adapt ourselves to instrumentalised time (and no doubt change ourselves in the process), our experience of our own lives is not one of homogeneous, quantifiable, exchangeable units being progressively used up, but one of multiple, overlapping or tessellated, interacting or incommensurable, forms of temporal experience and process.

In further interpreting *Waiting* and *Of Woods & Water* I want to refer primarily to Deleuze's three syntheses of time. To briefly establish the context, I will summarize, drawing on James Williams's book *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*. According to Deleuze's account in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, '[t]imes are made in multiple synthetic processes ... [so that] time is the result of the syntheses'; the 'multiple times' produced by the syntheses are incommensurable, forming 'a network of asymmetrical formal and singular processes'. The first synthesis of time 'implies a process in the present determining the past and future as dimensions of the process'; the second synthesis takes the past as 'the primary process', so that 'the present becomes a dimension of the past, as its most contracted leading tip when we picture the past as an expanding cone'.⁴⁰ The third synthesis of time is 'the pure and empty form of time', is the 'condition for novelty' and reinterprets 'Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return' via the principle that 'only difference returns and never sameness'.⁴¹

The first synthesis of time further illuminates the role of repetition in Clark's work, and in human experience, while demonstrating one radical difference between human perception and memory on the one hand, and computational processes and 'memory' on the other. One reason that human experience is neither homogeneous nor quantifiable is that each moment of a human life is (at least potentially) a revision of all the preceding moments (the present operating on the past so as to transform it) and of those to follow (the present operating on the future so as to condition it). This transformation process is acted out on a micro level within individual sections of *Of Woods & Water*:

what you thought might take place
is what thought will displace
the trace of a presence
a thrill through the grass

Reading these lines, each word as it is read is, momentarily, the 'present' of that act of reading. Each word, carrying forward the 'thought', 'take[s] place' in, and takes the place of, the present moment, only to be 'displaced' by the next word, thereby becoming a 'trace'. Each word as read revises, enhances, shifts, the meaning of preceding words. The semantic space of 'thought' in the first line (a verb in the past tense meaning imagined, or expected) is defined by contradistinction to 'thought' (a noun meaning a mental process). 'Take place' as a commonplace phrase for 'happen' is subtly revised by the skewed symmetry of 'displace' ('take – place' / 'dis – place') and both are further shifted by the internal rhyme of 'trace', setting up a sense of connotations running through, across and back: a trace which is found in a place; a trace which takes the place (in memory?) of a place (displaces it; it becomes only a trace).

The second synthesis of time (the present as a dimension of the past) is embodied in literature in familiar concepts such as 'tradition' and 'intertextuality'. All literary works are in some sense conditioned by what has preceded them. Both first and second syntheses are registered in Eliot's famous formulations in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent':

the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ... The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them ... for order to persist after the supervision of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered ... the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.

Literary language, and poetic language in particular, and Clark's poetic of accumulative series in particular, enact the terms of the second synthesis. For example, the word 'green' is one which recurs in *Of Woods & Water*; the following are individual lines from various points in the sequence: 'drifts grey over green'; 'pale green over green'; 'are a deeper green'; 'green filling every distance'; 'green dipped in the stream'; 'in the green each incident'; 'the moss is green'. A single section reads:

green above you
below and behind you
green with you
green around you

The first occurrence of the word 'green' initiates what will become a series of instances, each of which is different by virtue of being a repetition, so that each is conditioned by what has preceded it:

From the outside there must be a difference between the repeated things for repetition to be registered, for without such a difference, there is only one and the same thing and not a repetition.⁴²

Multiple dimensions of repetition with difference play out here. Intertextuality: the echo of Marvell's 'The Garden' – 'a green thought in a green shade'; a line which Clark has reimagined in material forms on a number of occasions, always playing on the indefinite number of multiple shades of green.⁴³ Another form of repetition with

difference is thus evoked (that of shades of colour), while *Of Woods & Water* is conditioned by Clark's preceding works (*After Marvell*, 1980), and in turn conditions those which follow, in this sequence of intertextual relations within and between poets.

The third synthesis of time in Deleuze's philosophy of time illuminates the absent presence of the human subject in *Waiting*; what might, in another form of poetry, constitute the lyrical 'I'. From the opening lines – 'sitting/on a stone/in the dark/waiting' – there is an implicit (human?) presence who is the grammatical subject of the verbs, but no name or pronoun ever appears. The relevance of the third synthesis of time requires explanation by a somewhat extended quotation. As explained by Williams:

when you actively conceive of a proposition such as 'I am breathing', you can chose to vary the attribute, from 'breathing' to 'walking', for instance. You cannot control or deny the way in which both those conceptions take place in time; the denial itself even presupposes time. This is the passivity Deleuze is concerned with. It is a double passivity, though. This is because *it is not the subject of the active conception that is directly passive, but rather, it is passive through a self positioned in time*. The 'I' that conceives of the proposition is different from the 'me' positioned in time by being a living and sleeping thing. So now being is divided between an active subject and passive self where any action by the subject presupposes that self because the subject is only passively determinable in time through the self. A passive self is the condition for any active subject. The 'I' is therefore fractured or traversed by a fault line, because of the way the self is determinable in time.⁴⁴

Clark's *Waiting* would have been a very different poem had it started 'I am sitting/on a stone/in the dark/waiting'; it would have been in a more conventional lyrical mode, which would have implied a relatively straightforward sense of reflective agency. What the concept of the third synthesis of time helps to bring into sharp focus is a question concerning waiting: is it active (something one *does*) or passive (something that happens to one)? It seems to partake of both. One can actively

decide to wait or not ('I am going to wait for the right moment to tell him'; 'I am not going to wait for the bus, I would rather walk'), or one can have relatively little choice ('we will have to wait for the tide to go out'; 'all we can do now is wait'). Even if once *decides* to wait, it is not clear that waiting itself could be construed as an action; rather it seems something which occurs, to which one is given over, more or less willingly. Deleuze's synthesis identifies the role of time in this uncertainty, and potentially offers an analysis of the active and passive components. Waiting (both the activity and the poem) foreground the 'self positioned in time'; serving, therefore, as a figure or allegory of the condition of living with a fractured 'I' (or subject); one 'traversed by a fault line', dependent upon a 'passive self' (or 'me') as the 'condition for any active subject'. This fracture splits open the dehumanized instrumentality and linearity of a lifetime imagined in terms of processing speed. The active subject might be tempted by such a rationalised self-understanding, but its dependence on the passive self undermines that vision. The present participles without pronouns of the poem embody, in poetic and syntactic form, that divided condition. The third synthesis of time involves 'the future' which 'has its prior processes and includes the past and present as dimensions'.⁴⁵ This seems a productive point from which to interpret waiting; a process in which the (imagined or expected) future determines the nature of the present. Waiting is a future-oriented process, amenable to understanding via the third synthesis' prioritising of 'the future as a novel event', and 'the new as pure difference determined through singularities'.⁴⁶

The link between formal poetics and the ethics of delay is suggested by Clark's comments in a recent interview:

I do think that the vertical pull of lineation, together with a certain avant-garde practice of parataxis ... is too much in collaboration with consumerism, with the continual inducement to move on. If something is worthy of mention at all, give it some space and time, before moving on to the next thing.⁴⁷

Here Clark reverses, or shifts, the claims sometimes made for parataxis as a form of resistance to commodified subjectivity embodied in syntax.⁴⁸ This seems to mark a

point of dissent from the poetics of the 'British Poetry Revival' with which Clark was in part associated, though he continues to embody another element of that practice: the role of small presses as a resistance to 'accelerated participation in consumerism'.⁴⁹ *Waiting* has some paratactic elements, in sequences such as 'standing/walking/running/waiting', but its combination of such list-like parataxis with hypotactic syntax such as 'a waiting/integral/to every/activity' does not resemble the typical paratactic disruptions of 'linguistically-innovative poetry' which often (notably, for example, in the work of Tom Raworth) has a rapid forward movement; there is a sense of poise rather than such momentum in Clark's work. The idea of careful attention as a source of value is a relatively familiar one in the context of the reception and criticism of poetry. The practice of 'close reading', privileged since the time of New Criticism and Modernism, implies the idea of 'close attention' to the poem (though not necessarily to the world). For Clark, attention to the poem *is*, in a sense, attention to the world, or at least an incitement or inducement to intensive modes of attention. Close attention to the perceptual world is often celebrated by critics and reviewers as a quality of the poet, which then results in a poem which repays the reader's close attention. But Clark's work, while resolutely material and linguistically self-aware, has a strong quality of pointing the reader to the potential of their own perceptual and interactive acts, rather than inviting them to share the poet's own; what Alice Tarbuck has termed his propaedeutic technique:

Clark's poetry, whilst never overtly didactic, is nevertheless propaedeutic, preparing the reader for encounters in the natural world which will require their attention, honed and developed through close engagement with Clark's poetry.⁵⁰

This is the particular way in which Clark has followed through on the resistance to the lyric subject, a resistance so central to the innovative poetry movement of the 1960s onwards, with which he was associated, but from which he remains distinct.⁵¹ The practice and valuation of close reading and close attention have often been phrased in terms which link them to clarity, precision and enlightenment. But

Clark's work is alert to what one might term the attentional unconscious: that attention is not simply a matter of will, training and focus, but a complex set of states and practices. This is conveyed in section 32 of *Of Woods & Water*:

something made of shadow
at the edge of attention
with an undulating motion
retreats into shadow

Attention has an edge, and a dimension of attention is to be responsive to its own edges: to the shadow as well as the light. There is always the pattern of light and shade: any foreground of attention requires a background; any act of will is conditioned by the unwilling. Attention, understood as something we 'give' (rather than pay) to the world, is matched by the gifts which the world gives us and the gifts which are passed amongst the objects of the world; a possibility affirmed through its negation in *Of Woods & Water*.

the grace of the birch belongs to it
it is not the gift of a passing breeze
is there a shape you recover again
when what moves you leaves you
(Section 30)

At stake here are questions of time (process) and essence (belonging), as well as the being of both humans and non-human objects such as trees. *Of Woods & Water* contains few pronouns, and none in the first person, but 'you' occurs a number of times. At first sight the reader is likely to take this as the generalised form of 'you', in English an informal equivalent to 'one'; perhaps also an address to the reader. But the lines above ask us to consider a non-human 'you' in the shape of the birch, so that here Clark's writing partakes of the recent shift, in many forms of philosophy, poetry and poetics towards a rethinking of the boundaries and shaping of the 'human', seen for example in the evocation of the 'more-than-human' by John Burnside and Kathleen

Jamie; in Jane Bennett's vital materialism; in Timothy Morton's 'strange stranger'; in Dona Haraway's cyborgs and Val Plumwood's critique of dualism.⁵² In Clark's lines, the breeze, a temporal process, shows the grace of the birch, but that grace 'belongs to' the birch by virtue of its biological and perceptual being: its botanical morphology and growth patterns. The location and belonging of properties and agency is further destabilized by the uncertain status of 'is there a shape you recover again': a question lacking a question mark ('*Is* there a shape [that] you recover again?'), or a statement about the role and destination of 'the grace' ('the grace ... is *there* a shape you recover again')? One might interpret the role of the breeze in terms of Deleuze's first synthesis of time: process in the present determining the past as dimension, in that the breeze as present process (movement of air) gives perceptual shape and aesthetic consequence ('grace') to the shape of the birch which is a product of its past development. The being of the birch would then be embodied in the second synthesis of time: the past as 'the primary process', wherein 'the present becomes a dimension of the past, as its most contracting leading tip when we picture the past as an expanding cone': the past of the birch defines and gives birth to its present shape and movement.⁵³ The touch of theological language ('grace') is not irrelevant here: the dialectic of will and gift has echoes of the Christian theology of salvation by works and by grace, in an oblique manner somewhat typical of Clark's relation to religious modes of thought, as well as of their broader presence in (primarily) secular twenty-first-century poetry. The meditation on time, essence and being in relation to the birch is transferred onto the human in lines 3 and 4 of the section (linked by the homophone of 'leaves' – as verb and plural noun). As the wind moves and then leaves the birch, so process or experience moves the individual human subject (changes them, elicits emotion, displaces them), and then departs, leaving them to recover the shape of self-definition which will nevertheless be changed, as humans are changed by all interaction: the first and second syntheses of time operating in relation to human selfhood and being.⁵⁴

Attention and time are closely related because attention can only be given in the present, but can only acquire force by being sustained over time (momentary attention is close to inattention). Here the temporal and spatial dimensions of both word

and image, and their reception come into play. The art historian T.J. Clark's account of looking at two Poussin paintings in his book *The Sight of Death* is an exemplary act of attention to the aesthetic object which reimports the awareness of time into the image and into the process of its reception and interpretation. He tries to represent for the reader his own temporal process of viewing and interpreting the paintings over a period of days, and makes the process or act of repetition central to aesthetic experience, rather than a contingent circumstance:

Many of us, maybe all of us, look at some images repeatedly, but it seems we do not write that repetition ... Maybe we fear that the work we depend on images to do for us – the work of immobilizing, and therefore making tolerable – will be undone if we throw the image back into the flow of time.⁵⁵

Underlying the effacement of the temporal which T.J. Clark detects in art criticism is some trace of Gotthold Lessing's view of visual art as a spatial, rather than temporal form. If applied to the Poussin works, this would involve the sense of a landscape painting as both representing a moment, and as being an object/image the aesthetic completion of which abstracts it from the flow of time.⁵⁶ With text works, and particularly poetry, of course, the assumptions are rather different. Poetry is habitually read as temporal and dynamic, and internal repetition (in diction, metre, pattern etc.) are formally crucial. However, Heather H. Yeung points out 'the suspended temporality and non-narrative nature, or "space" of poetic voice'.⁵⁷ These effects are equally pronounced in the forms of poetry which tend to resist or bracket 'voice', notably the traditions of concrete and intermedial poetry which inform Thomas A. Clark's work. Such forms of poetry imbue text with image-like qualities, including a potential sense of stasis, and the possibility (for example with single-word poems) of more-or-less instant (initial) 'reading'. None of Thomas A. Clark's works discussed here fall into that category: they have a concern with process and movement, as signalled by the present participles which are so frequent in *Waiting* and play a significant role in *Of Woods & Water*. Nevertheless, *Waiting* focuses on a process which is not a process, or a process which embodies a degree of stasis (precisely, something

not happening, or having not yet happened). Comparably, *Of Woods & Water*, as its title suggests, is concerned with the experience of natural objects which engage in, or are defined, by, natural processes, but with a degree of the 'timeless' because of their steady persistence: the water flowing and turning, the light falling, the leaves trembling. The present participles and gerunds embody by their grammatical status (extending to the roles of noun, verb and adjective) the obscure relations of object and process. *Of Woods & Water* is, in a sense, and with the necessary caveats concerning 'landscape' as a concept, a 'landscape poem' as the Poussin works are 'landscape paintings'.⁵⁸ It raises some of the same questions about temporality, process, stasis:

Is what we are looking at in *Calm* a transitory state of affairs, or enduring? Is it Nature or Art here that has brought the world to a standstill?⁵⁹

Such questions are the result of T. J. Clark's sustained act of close attention, not only in the sense that they arise from long reflection, but also in the sense that the temporality of his extended viewing, one assumes, intensifies his perception of temporality within the work. When one looks repeatedly at what might be a 'moment' – the cows, smoke, water, horse, and so on in Poussin's painting, all in a precise place and representing a condition which will never be precisely repeated – one is led to reflect very intensely upon the nature of that momentariness. What would be comparable in the process of reception of Thomas A. Clark's poetry would be a form of attention requiring, not so much concentration, as patience. This would involve a waiting for the appearance or experience of what Andrew Bowie terms the 'hermeneutic' or 'aesthetic conception ... of truth' as 'revelation or "disclosure"', distinct from 'conceptions of truth as warrantable assertibility, though sharing with these an ultimate dependence on a process of 'seeing as'.⁶⁰ T.J. Clark describes his notes (which led to or became *The Sight of Death*) as 'a record of looking taking place and changing through time'.⁶¹ To look in a changing way at what may be a moment is one of the defining experiences of responding to art. What emerges is an understanding of the paintings in some of the same terms as those I have been using to read Thomas A. Clark's poems: not only temporality, the momentary and process, but also dark, light and shadow:

light and darkness have to be part of my story. I need to hold onto the *pathos* of these paintings' materiality.⁶²

Aren't there plenty of moments in life that, whether they last or not, have enough of permanence about them to stand for things as they are, 'things as the mind conceives them'.⁶³

T.J. Clark's reflections bring him to the presence or sight of death. In relation to Thomas A. Clark's work, this leads one to reflect on the implicit presence of death within the pastoral mode with which his work is a complex engagement. Reminding oneself of the literary-historical connections between the pastoral and the elegiac, one returns to the concluding section in *Of Woods & Water*, and its difference from the first section which it echoes:

on a wide bend of the river
there is a leisurely turning of water
that flows so profoundly it can
relax into every gesture

on a wide bend of the river
there is a leisurely turning of water
away from the light and into
a broad course of darkness

The relaxed 'leisurely turning' of the opening is transformed by the lines which follow its later appearance, into a 'leisurely turning' with more sombre overtones: the turn into darkness, with its suggestion of death, even perhaps of the Styx. And this is consistent with the poem's meditation on time and process, since it is death that, above all, defines the human experience of temporality, and pervades the iconography and symbolism of light, dark and shadow. T.J. Clark interprets the pastoral aspect of Poussin's *Landscape with a Calm* and *Landscape with a Snake* via Panofsky's essay on the painter's *Et in Arcadia Ego*, where Panofsky

sees Virgil's version of pastoral as turning on a dissonance between ordinary human sorrows and the unruffled calm of Arcady. The dissonance is resolved, but by means of mood more than story or form; and the mood – the 'mixture of sadness and tranquillity which is perhaps Virgil's most personal contribution to poetry' – is that of evening coming on.⁶⁴

Clark's point, however, is that Poussin resists such a resolution:

Landscape with a Calm works with much of this material, obviously. But I'd say that its closeness to the Virgil stock phrases only makes its refusal quite to repeat them the more clear. Hesperus has not risen, and shadows have not gathered for good.⁶⁵

There are elements of the neo-classical in Thomas A. Clark's work: a strong sense of decorum and proportion; an impulse towards the general (woods and water rather than a particular wood or a particular river) and the ideal; a restraint or even at times severity of style (though balanced by humour and lightness of touch). Such elements form part of its resistance to aspects of modernity. Returning to those first and last section of *Of Woods & Water*, one could find echoes of Virgilian pastoral, although stripped of myth and character:

No, never again shall I find solace among the wood-nymphs,
Or in poetry, even; words and woods mean nothing to me now
....

My goats

You have pastured well, the twilight deepens – home, then, home!⁶⁶

But, as T.J. Clark comments of Poussin, in *Of Woods & Water* 'shadows have not gathered for good'. If there is a touch of melancholy and even foreboding in the turn to darkness (as also in 'singing/weeping/hurting/waiting', in *Waiting*), it is outweighed by the pleasure and affirmation of what a resistance to accelerated, commodified time can offer: the leisurely, profound and relaxed gesture of natural processes,

forms of temporality which, being non-linear, can contemplate death as other than simply the bringing to an end of a series.

As a model of such a resistant understanding of time and attention, we might turn to one of T.J. Clark's comments on the experience of repeated aesthetic attention which led to his book:

But astonishing things happen if one gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again: aspect after aspect of the picture surfaces, what is salient and what incidental alter bewilderingly from day to day, the larger order of the depiction breaks up, recrystallizes, fragments again, persists like an afterimage. And slowly the question arises: What is it, fundamentally, I am returning to in this particular case?⁶⁷

In contrast to the idea of a 'tragically insufficient' lifetime allowance of '185 billion bits' of human processing, this passage envisages time and attention as complex sets of layered and accumulative processes; as inflected by mood, context and occasion. It invokes an aesthetic but also ontological mode of attention which, like waiting, is neither wholly passive nor wholly active, and is not captured by the subject-object binary. It also suggests the particular accumulative and repetitive form of attention which Clark's work composes, offers as a gift, and rewards.

Notes

¹ Thomas A. Clark, 'In Praise of Walking', in *Distance and Proximity* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000), pp. 13-22 (p. 19).

² See Terry Gifford, 'Towards a Post-Pastoral View of British Poetry' in *The Environmental Tradition in English Literature*, ed. John Parham (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 51-63.

³ Simon Malpas, 'Touching Art: Aesthetics, Fragmentation and Community', in *The New Aestheticism*, ed. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 89.

⁴ Lambert Zuidervart, 'Theodor W. Adorno', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/adorno/>>. The phrase 'social antithesis of society' is a direct quotation from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*.

⁵ Andrew Epstein, *Attention Equals Life: The Pursuit of the Everyday in Contemporary Poetry and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 2.

⁶ Epstein, p. 13.

⁷ Epstein, p. 11.

⁸ Epstein, p. 14.

⁹ Epstein, p. 12.

- ¹⁰ Epstein, p. 21.
- ¹¹ Epstein, p. 7.
- ¹² 'For the discerning intellect of Man/When wedded to this goodly universe/In love and holy passion, shall find these/A simple produce of the common day'. Wordsworth, Preface to *The Excursion*, *Wordsworth Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (1936; London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 590.
- ¹³ Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (2nd edn; Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 121.
- ¹⁴ Wilde, quoted Connor, p. 122.
- ¹⁵ 'Attention' has been a significant concept in the reception of Clark's work, though sometimes in relation to language rather than the world. For example, Tony Lopez writes that an early minimal poem 'calls up a particular kind of attention to arbitrary linguistic features' and another aims to 'entice from us an attentiveness to language'. Tony Lopez, 'Thomas A. Clark: Nationality, Modernism', in *Meaning Performance: Essays on Poetry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2006), pp. 177–189 (pp. 179, 181).
- ¹⁶ Dominic Smith, 'Paying Attention: Philosophy as Strong Therapy for the Information Age', *World Literature and Dissent* (Routledge, in press), TS, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 1; quoted Smith, p. 4.
- ¹⁸ Lev Manovich suggests that the breadth of the term 'interactivity' limits its usefulness since human-computer interaction is 'by definition interactive'. *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001), p. 55.
- ¹⁹ Quoted Smith, p. 8.
- ²⁰ Quoted Smith, p. 15.
- ²¹ For example Robert Sheppard writes that "The insistence that "attentive reading" is necessary reminds us that "to understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it". Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents, 1950–2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005) p. 9.
- ²² Smith, p. 3.
- ²³ Thomas A. Clark, *Of Woods & Water: Forty Eight Delays* (Moschatel Press, 2008).
- ²⁴ The technical meaning of delay in musical technology, relating to a delay produced in an audio signal, seems probably irrelevant here.
- ²⁵ Thomas A. Clark, *Twenty Four Sentence About the Forest* (Moschatel Press, 1982). This and a number of other points are indebted to Alice Tarbuck's very detailed knowledge of the Clark archive at the Scottish Poetry Library.
- ²⁶ Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate: Discoveries from a Secret World*, trans. Jane Billingham (2016; London: William Collins, 2017), p. 168.
- ²⁷ Thomas A. Clark, *Waiting* (Moschatel Press, 1992).
- ²⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1950; London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 48.
- ²⁹ Smith, p. 21.
- ³⁰ One of Clark's works portrays the music for a traditional Irish folk song, in common or 4:4 time. Thomas A. Clark, *The Dawning of the Day*, (Pittenweem, Moschatel, 2015).
- ³¹ 'A Song From Armenia', from 'The Songbook of Sebastian Arrurruz', *Broken Hierarchies: Poems 1952–2012* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 77.
- ³² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1994; London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 1.
- ³³ James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), p. 33.

- ³⁴ 'Clark's interest is primarily in the materiality of text and its visual potential'. Alice Tarbuck, *'Some Particulars': The Poetry and Practice of Thomas A. Clark* (PhD thesis, University of Dundee, 2018), p. 59.
- ³⁵ 'The Rejection of Closure' was originally delivered as a talk in 1983. It is available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69401/the-rejection-of-closure> [accessed 19 June 2018].
- ³⁶ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 1.
- ³⁷ *Generosity* (Dundee: Poetry Beyond Text, 2010); *Gaelic Flowers* (Dundee: University of Dundee, 2016)
- ³⁸ *Poetry Beyond Text* was a research project based at the Universities of Dundee and Kent, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's *Beyond Text* programme. *Generosity* can be seen online at <http://www.poetrybeyondtext.org/clark-thomas.html>.
- ³⁹ Adrian Parr, 'Repetition', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr, p. 223.
- ⁴⁰ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 3.
- ⁴¹ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 86, 87, 79, 87.
- ⁴² Williams, *Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 23.
- ⁴³ *After Marvell* (1980) is 'a book of green pages without text'; *after Andrew Marvell* (2015) is 'five hand-coloured squares of green in different shades, arranged horizontally along a small card'; *green shade: homage to Andrew Marvell* (2016) is 'twenty-one framed pictures, each a slightly different shade of green'; *green shades* (2016) 'consists only of a pair of green-tinted spectacles'. Tarbuck. pp. 187–88. In this context, and in relation to Epstein's theory of the refusal of transcendence in contemporary poetry of the 'everyday', it is worth recalling that Marvell's line concludes a stanza which specifically describes a process of transcendence: 'Yet it [the mind] creates, transcending these/Far other worlds, and other seas'. Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden', in *The Complete Poems*, ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 101.
- ⁴⁴ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 81.
- ⁴⁵ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 14.
- ⁴⁶ Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, pp. 14, 15.
- ⁴⁷ Alice Tarbuck, 'In, among, with and from: In Conversation with Thomas A. Clark'. *PN Review*, 42.5 (2016), pp. 37–41 (p. 40).
- ⁴⁸ See, for example, Robert Sheppard's strictures on Movement poetry: 'a poetry of closure, narrative coherence and grammatical and syntactic cohesion [which] ... posited the existence of a stable ego' (*The Poetry of Saying*, p. 27), with which he contrasts the resistance to such constructs of a (frequently paratactic) innovative poetry.
- ⁴⁹ Sheppard, p. 48.
- ⁵⁰ Alice Tarbuck, *'Some Particulars'*, p. 11.
- ⁵¹ Alice Tarbuck argues that 'Clark has always removed himself from the mainstream, and even from the mainstreams of the avant-garde. Clark is interested in formally innovative poetry precisely because it offers a move away from the mainstream, and thus a move away from the "anguished poetry of self" ... this thesis has revealed Clark's complex relationship with the influence of movements, individuals and forms more broadly'. *'Some Particulars'*, p. 318.
- ⁵² See: Attila Dósa, 'Poets and Other Animals: An Interview with John Burnside', in Attila Dósa (ed.), *Beyond Identity: New Horizons in Modern Scottish Poetry* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 113–134 (p. 121); Attila Dósa, 'Kathleen Jamie: More Than Human', in *Beyond Identity*; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002).

- ⁵³ James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time*, p. 3.
- ⁵⁴ Mark J.P. Wolf points out that, while interactivity is a quality frequently attributed to computer systems, interaction with a computer often has little or no permanent effect on the computer, whereas social, physical or chemical interactions produce 'long-lasting and irreversible effects' on humans. Mark J.P. Wolf, *Abstracting Reality Art, Communication, and Cognition in the Digital Age* (University Press of America: 2000), p. 161.
- ⁵⁵ T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 8.
- ⁵⁶ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon. An Essay upon the Limits of Painting and Poetry. With remarks illustrative of various points in the history of ancient art* (1766).
- ⁵⁷ Heather H. Yeung, *Spatial Engagement with Poetry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 65.
- ⁵⁸ For a critique of the ideology implicit in 'landscape', see Jonathan Smith, 'The Lie That Blinds: Destabilizing the Text of Landscape', in *Place/Culture/Representation*, eds. James Duncan and David Ley (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 78–92, (pp. 78–79).
- ⁵⁹ T.J. Clark, p. 12.
- ⁶⁰ Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 18.
- ⁶¹ T.J. Clark, p. 5.
- ⁶² T.J. Clark, p. 12.
- ⁶³ T.J. Clark, p. 16.
- ⁶⁴ T.J. Clark, p. 93.
- ⁶⁵ T.J. Clark, pp. 93–4.
- ⁶⁶ *The Eclogues, Georgics and Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. C. Day Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 44.
- ⁶⁷ T.J. Clark, p. 5.

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